

A Review of the Civil Society Role in Exposing COVID-19 Corruption in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The paper examines the role of civil society in Exposing COVID-19 corruption in Zimbabwe. The essence is in the possibility of learning how civil society can adequately act as a watchdog against corrupt practices in the management of COVID-19 in Zimbabwe. As such, the paper presents documentary reviews and analyses of the connection between civil society and COVID-19-induced corruption. Using reviews of various literature, this paper analyses the role of civil society in challenging COVID-19 linked corruption in Zimbabwe since the advent of the pandemic in the country. The paper concludes that civil society was critical in exposing corrupt practices within government and the Health Ministry in particular. Principal among these cases was the Drax Scandal, the Jaji Scandal and the private hospital's scandal. However, the extent of success varies with the type of corruption exposed and challenged. Relatedly, the endemic corruption problems in Zimbabwe explain why some civil societies aren't simply proactive in exposing corrupt officeholders both in public and private health sectors via a nationwide campaign.

Keywords: Civil Society, Corruption, COVID-19, Lockdown, Pandemic, Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION

During the first phase of the COVID-19 virus attack around march 2020, WHO and various national health authorities designated measures to contain the spread of the virus while studies were underway on the production of vaccines and cures. Among these measures were lockdowns of various measures enforced by the police and military forces of various countries. The mandatory wearing of recommended face masks, running water and soap to wash hands, while hand sanitizers and sprays were recommended in most government and private premises (Adisa and Asuelime, 2021). Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic increases the escalation of inequalities in accessing health care, education, income prospects, and participation in communities, including Zimbabwe, due to corruption (Nwachukwu and Asuelime, 2021).

The recommendation of face masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) created a brisk business for manufacturers and middle-dealers to supply governments and other private persons and companies. Due to the strong influence of governments in attempts to control the pandemic, procurement of PPE and other consumables opened room for rent-seeking and other forms of corruption among the politically connected in Zimbabwe. The corruption issue on the procurement of PPE was a hot topic that dominated both the traditional press and social media. It was also a divisive topic that became highly political (Maulani, Nyadera and Wnadekha, 2020). The

prominent COVID-19 corruption headliner includes *the Drax Scandal* - a COVID-19 PPE procurement corruption involving Drax Consult SAGL. *The Jaji investment Scandal* - wherein the Zimbabwean government is alleged to have paid over USD\$ 60 000 to a company domiciled in Namibia for COVID-19 test kits; *The private executive COVID-19 hospitals' Scandal* - wherein the Zimbabwean government was setting up private executive health facilities for government ministers and other business persons; and allegations of governments' *selective application of Lockdown Regulations*.

Whether during COVID-19 or not, corruption is a well-known problem among African countries, including Zimbabwe, which affects all branches of government. However, this aspect of Zimbabwe's COVID-19 corruption deserves more attention because it is not understood correctly. It is thus important to substantiate that civil society played a visible role in exposing COVID-19 corruption by politically linked personnel and entities. However, while accepting that some corruption took part, the government accused some members and groups from the civil society of using the corruption scandals and, in some cases, exaggerating them for political expediency. This article discusses the role of civil society in exposing COVID-19 linked corruption in Zimbabwe. It starts by discussing the civil society and COVID-19 corruption in Zimbabwe and critiques the rebuttal against the civil society by the government before concluding (Adekoye, 2020).

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH SECTOR CORRUPTION IN ZIMBABWE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

In the 80s, Zimbabwe arguably developed a health sector considered one of the best in Sub-Saharan

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Africa. The government invested significantly in the continuous improvement of its health services post-independence era, reflecting positives in health indicators (Sithole, 2013). However, following the various economic crisis that was ushered into the country in the 2000s, i.e. inflation, political conflicts and instability, international sanctions, necessitated an economic decline that affected the country's health sector budgets (Makochekanwa and Kwaramba, 2010). Thus resulting in an almost collapse of the health sector and

"several hospitals, clinics and health centers all over the country nearly closed during this period due to a shortage in medical personnel, equipment and medicine. In Zimbabwe, corruption has become a form of "coping mechanism," and this has been described as 'survival corruption' as doctors and nurses can go for months without receiving their salaries or the salaries will be inadequate" (Muchena, 2019).

To this end, the state of Zimbabwe's health systems performance is almost unconscious as it is seriously crippled by corruption. The advent of COVID-19 and the wake of corruption that follow the pandemic gives impetus to the need for a paper to look into how corruption is exposed. One of the ways to do this is to highlight the role the civil society has played in helping to push for improved resource management towards addressing the negative effects of corruption in the country's health sector and society.

To be clear, this paper thus contributes to knowledge on public health and corruption in Zimbabwe during a pandemic. It is significant for providing a foundation for discourses on corruption and COVID-19 era public health. In addition, the paper provides an opportunity for assisting and strengthening health sector governance in Zimbabwe as well as to help them make vital revisions to their current strategies to stamping out corruption in the processes towards ending COVID-19 in the country.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN ZIMBABWE

Like the rest of Africa, civil society in Zimbabwe did not come with the advent of colonialism. There had always been voluntary associations for development outside the family and the politics of various chiefdoms (Pul, 2014). Many community communal activities were

not directly related to monarchical powers or the core family units. These activities were undertaken to bring about communal socio-economic assistance to various people in society. However, these activities may not have been related to the concept of republican democracy as developed in Europe. Various types of monarchs ruled various African communities. Hence, civil society, as in the conceptualization of Tocqueville (1988), was an offshoot of republican governance; the African types should be seen then as having been unique.

The advent of colonialism changed the nature and course of civil society in Zimbabwe. Colonialism brought its concepts of civil society, which were imposed on Zimbabwe. In contrast, the excesses of colonialism led to the development of movements that sought to challenge the oppressive and emasculating nature of colonialism (Adekoye and Kondlo, 2020). Concerning the labor movement, for instance, on the one hand, the white labor movement was driven by the need to push for better wages while also pushing the government to maintain a caste system between whites and blacks. On the other hand, the black labor movement, which began to grow from the late 1920s, challenged the socio-economic setup, which put white at the top of an aristocratic hierarchical system with blacks at the bottom (Sambureni, 1996). The labor movement also raised political questions and issues. It became the incubation of mass nationalism, given that the socio-economic issues they raised were rooted in the political setup of the country (Muusha, 2011). The white settler community also established its own civil society organizations in line with their societal needs. For instance, there was the establishment of the Rhodesian National Farmers' Union (NFU) in 1942, which was later renamed, Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) in 1980, which lobbied and challenged the government on agricultural policies and legislation primarily for the white commercial farmers (CFU, 2012).

The nature of civil society transformed with the end of colonialism as there was some convergence of society with the end of separate development, which was the hallmark of the colonial regime. The new administration took over with a policy of reconciliation which was against tribalism, classism and racism. This meant a change in societal needs and challenges. Since then, as the political atmosphere changed, so did civil society's nature and direction (Asuelime, 2017). The transformation of the civil society in the country was a response to changes in the constitution and

composition of the state. In the 1980s, civil society transformation was driven by the white civil society coming to terms with the fall of the minority government and the rise of a black majority government. At the same time, the anti-colonial civil society movement also had to transform, given the fall of the colonial political order. The bulk of the civil society movements in the early 1980s were social development-oriented (Chirimambowa and Chimedza, 2014). Many saw the period as ripe for the social transformation of the black majority, especially due to the popularity of the socialist ideology then. For instance, the transformation of the RNFU to the CFU was an acknowledgment of the fall of Rhodesia but refused to merge with other majority-black smallholder agricultural unions to preserve its economic and political dominance (Bratton, 1994a). The socio-economic challenges of the post-Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) and the Fast Track Land Reform Programme and the fall out of Zimbabwe from the west came seismic changes to the nature and activities of civil society. The labor movement, particularly the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), became highly agitated and with other civil society organizations like the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and the student movement, the Zimbabwe National Students' Union (NASU), helped create the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in September of 1999 (Alexander, 2000; Zhou, 2014; Adekoye, 2019).

The socio-political transformation in Zimbabwe and its subsequent impact on civil society have shown an endurance of the primordial conceptualization of civil society. Social movements have transformed from being issue-oriented organizations to becoming political entities or movements supporting some political organizations. As noted, the excesses of the white minority rule led to social movements that either surrogated or transformed into political organizations directly challenging the state; the post ESAP crisis led to the transformation of some civil society organizations into a political movement. The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999, while organizations like the CFU, which did not join, threw their weight behind the opposition political party (Alexander, 2000; Chirimambowa and Chimedza, 2014; Zhou, 2014: 5). The civil society has continued to challenge the government's excesses, and in response, the government has viewed combative civil society as a stumbling block to its plans. Hence such civil society is branded as western sponsored and puppets, or lacking in patriotism even in the

Mnangagwa era, who came to power promising different political culture due mainly to the politics of the creation of the MDC in 1999 (Zhou, 2014; Asuelime, 2018).

A controversial issue in the conceptualization of civil society is whether we can or cannot include opposition political parties as civil society organizations in Africa. On the one hand, one can argue for their inclusion based on voluntary entry and exit and being a movement that can counter excesses of those holding state power. This understanding will be in line with the primordial and de Tocqueville conceptualization of civil society. On the other hand, however, opposition political parties in parliament are part of the government. While, as in the Zimbabwean case, they won't be part of the executive arm of the government, which is a preserve of the party that wins the presidency and a majority in parliament. The seat in parliament acts as a check to the executive. In this paper, opposition political parties are included because the parliament in Zimbabwe was, since independence, systematically weakened to the level that it is just a ceremonial seating to rubber-stamp the wills of the executive led by the President. Opposition political parties in Zimbabwe stand on an equal footing with another pressure group, with the difference that they can sit in parliament. Actions by the opposition political parties during the covid-19 pandemic are therefore classified as an act of the civil society movement.

COVID-19 LINKED CORRUPTION AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The rag of COVID-19 across the globe meant that states had to act quickly, and in most cases, there was a need to suspend some citizens' rights to institute containment measures against the spread of the virus. The declaration of the disease as a pandemic by the WHO gave states powers to act with urgency to meet the global requirements and be in line with such requirements given the porosity of borders. Paramilitary and military units from state security apparatus were deployed in the streets of most countries. This was also the case with Zimbabwe. Members from the police force and the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) were deployed to enforce the COVID-19 regulations.

The Zimbabwe government declared a disaster on 17 March 2020 (Voice of America (VOA), 2020). The declaration gave the government the power to deploy the military during a peaceful time to undertake police duties. It also empowered the executive arm of the

government to act swiftly with little oversight from the other arms of government. While the declaration was imperative, it opened room for corruption and the political tussle between the government, the opposition political parties (primarily the Movement for Democratic Change – Alliance) and the civil society organizations.

Concerning corruption, a number of high profile cases were recorded. These were as follows:

The Drax Scandal

The Drax Scandal was a COVID-19 PPE procurement deal in which a shelf company, going by the name Drax Consult SAGL, which was later changed to Drax International (Magaisa, 2020) of no known fixed address was granted a multi-million United States dollar tender to supply the PPE without going through the routine tender procedures. While there might have been no major issues on bypassing tender regulations given that the nation was in a state of disaster, the company's local representative, Delish Nguwaya, was an individual of many scandals that included possession of drugs and extortion (Matibiri, 2021). The history of Nguwaya was a clear textbook case of a person whom the government should never have dealt with. Unfortunately, Nguwaya had reached out to the President with purported donations for COVID-19 when many well-wishers were doing the same and managed to get a photo with the President and also a broadcast on the prime time 2000hrs news at the national broadcaster, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) TV (Nyathi, 2020).

The worst part of the deal was the excessive price inflation which the company had instituted. For instance, the company had respectively quoted the government N95 face masks and test kits at US\$ 28 and US\$ 34, each, when they were going for less than US\$ 5 and US\$ 15, each, respectively, at the local market (Kudzayi, 2020). This meant that the government was paying more than twice or thrice the market price when there were complaints of limited testing due to lack of equipment and lack of PPE for frontline workers due to limited funds. The scandal became hypocritical and exposed the government lacking sincerity and officials seeking to make personal gains out of a national crisis.

The Jaji Scandal

Under the Jaji investment scandal, the government has paid more than USD\$ 60 000 to a company

domiciled in Namibia for COVID-19 test kits (Kunambura, Chikono and Mananavire, 2020). As was in the Drax Scandal, Jaji Investments was said to have heavily inflated the prices of the test kits it supplied to the government from a procurement price of US\$ 300 to US\$ 66 000 (Mathuthu, 2020). The case was worsened by the revelation that the company had a non-existent Namibian address and was owned by one of the President's nephews and bodyguards (Mathuthu, 2020). The procurement process was marred by the revelation that the Minister of Health directed the Ministry's Permanent Secretary in a handwritten note to favor the company whose reputation was marred by a failure to pay taxes in Namibia (Mathuthu, 2020). Engaging such a company, which is not compliant with tax regulations in its registered jurisdiction, was equally scandalous, as were the price inflations.

Setting up Private Executive COVID-19 Hospitals

Among the scandals that rocked the government was the expose that the government was setting up private executive health facilities for government ministers and other business people (Taruvinga, 2020; Zvomuya, 2020). This was after the realization that health institutions in the country were not equipped to deal with COVID-19, especially in the wake of the death of the first victim, Zororo Makamba, son to a wealthy businessman connected to ZANU-PF, at a government isolation center at Wilkins Hospital in Harare (Taruvinga, 2020). Various developed countries where government executives were used to flying to for medical attention were no longer accessible due to international COVID-19 travel restrictions (Zvomuya, 2020). These realities brought back government officials to face the realities of a neglected health sector in the face of a global pandemic that was at best non-discriminating on class and political affiliation and at worst 'loving' more the powerful, wealthy affluent (Taruvinga, 2020). Various activists, including members of the opposition political parties and media personnel as well as other citizens, took to social media (specifically Twitter, Facebook and What's App) to expose the 'secret' establishment of the private facilities at Rock Foundation Medical Centre in the upmarket suburb of Mt. Pleasant and the upgrading of St. Anne's Hospital also in the upmarket suburb of Avondale. Social media had become the only vibrant platform of communication among civil society due to the movement and gathering restrictions issued by the government as a measure to contain the spread of the virus. Various community members on social media challenged the establishment of the hospitals charging

exorbitant fees to create social stratification on the treatment of the disease. MDC Alliance members like Job Sikhala and Thabani Mpfu threatened to march to the hospitals and disrupt the operations (Gonye and Mugugunyuki, 2020).

Selective Application of Lockdown Regulations

The civil society was also vocal on the government's selective application of COVID-19 regulations. Broadly, the ruling ZANU-PF and members linked to the government had leeway to hold political rallies of various natures and hold parties that broke social/physical distance regulations and wore face masks. Several political rallies were held by ZANU-PF, which also included those presided over by the President, Emmerson Mnangagwa, or his wife, Auxilia Mnangagwa, under various guises of either philanthropic work, groundbreaking ceremonies, hand over ceremonies and in some blunt cases, direct political campaigns (Munhende, 2021; Ndoro, 2021b).

During the same period, ZANU-PF also held its internal District Coordination Committees (DCCs) elections (Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), 2021). The ruling party-backed opposition splinter group, MDC-T (then led by Thokozani Khupe and now led by Douglas Mwonzora), also held its court-sanctioned extra-ordinary congress to elect a new president leadership (The Herald, 2020). These various political meetings were held without the observation of social and physical distancing among attendees. Concerning the MDC-T congress, Thokozani Khupe later informed that she had contracted COVID-19 (Dube, 2020), but the government conducted no contact traces.

Political leaders in ZANU-PF also held various parties. The most publicized were the birthday party of Information and Broadcasting Minister Senator Monica Mutsvangwa (Karombo, 2020) and the new year party held by Kudakwashe Tagwirei, a businessman with strong links to ZANU-PF (Ndoro, 2021a). While these events were held without any accountability, events conducted by the opposition or those not in political power were dealt with heavily. The MDC-A was denied any room for demonstrations on the basis of the enforcement of COVID-19 regulations whose numbers could or might have been less than those attracted by presidential and first lady's rallies. A musical concert held in Harare led to the arrest of the organizers (*Eye Witness News*, 2021). The selective application of the law was raised by civil society. However, the calls for

the arrest of at least the public rebuke of those who broke the regulations fell on deaf ears given that such actions also meant that the President had to rebuke himself and his wife.

ZIMBABWEAN CIVIL SOCIETY EXPOSE

Civil society played various roles in exposing and pushing the government to act against corruption. The role of the civil society was very delicate and, in some cases, dangerous given that some of the implicated persons were senior members in government, with others being linked to influential members in government. As shown above, the Minister of Health was implicated in the Drax Scandal, while Delish Nguwaya was alleged to have connections with members of the first family (Magaisa, 2020).

Journalists were at the forefront of exposing the scandals. Investigative journalism by Mduduzi Mathuthu of ZimLive, an online publication, and Hopewell Chin'ono unearthed how various persons were corruptly benefiting from the pandemic. The journalists used their rich network of informants in the government some, as civil servants who might have been disgruntled by their bosses' extravagance and corruption at a time when they were earning far below the poverty datum line. The media is also one of the primary channels through which the civil society can communicate with the government and other like-minded groups who direct interactions cannot reach. Hence, journalists and social media became central in the fight against COVID-19 linked corruption in Zimbabwe, especially given that the government controls television and radio media.

Organized labor in Zimbabwe was decimated by a combination of the fall of the formal economy as well as deliberate government policy to weaken the trade union movement after the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) played a central role in the birth of the opposition political party, the Movement for Democratic, and also bequeathed to it many leaders like the first MDC President, Morgan Tsvangirai. The country's labor movement attempted various successes to expose and push the government to act against corruption. Multiple unions are left mostly of professional civil servants and their umbrella union, the Apex Council (Asuelime and B. Simura, 2014).

The powerful unions in Zimbabwe are the Zimbabwe Hospital Doctors Association (ZHDA) and the Zimbabwe Nurses Association (ZINA). These

medical unions were at the forefront of exposing the demise of standards in government hospitals. The medical workers took various job actions that included crippling national strikes against lack of PPE and other hospital consumables and medication and poor remunerations (Mavhinga, 2020). The impact of their job actions is quickly felt and cannot be easily ignored by the government.

The medical practitioners went on an active campaign of leaking information showing the dire situation in the national hospitals. The information included images of nurses using hospital blankets and plastics as PPE (see Figure 1 below) and information on the unusual stillbirths in hospitals (see Figure 2 below) (Harding, 2020; France 24, 2020). The doctors and nurses might have taken the position of leaking the information to vindicate themselves after the government had attacked them for lack of care for the suffering patients but only caring for their incomes.

The nurses and doctors became vocal and active because they were heavily affected and infected by the virus (Munhende, 2020). The medical workers, referred to as frontline workers and had been earmarked for being the first to receive PPE and other COVID-19 related benefits, found themselves having to use ordinary plastics and cloth as PPE when the infection statistics were rising (Munhende, 2020). This was when

information on PPE supply corruption was viral, which infuriated nurses and the junior doctors to stage demonstrations and strikes (Samaita, 2020). In turn, the protests amplified the case of financial and medical donations mismanagement by the Ministry of Health and other government officials. The actions became vehicles not only to spread the information but also to trigger the national debate on corruption by government officials, albeit dominated only by social media.

Trained Teachers in Zimbabwe have had one challenge to deal with, i.e., unemployment (Adekoye and Mapepa, 2019). The advent of corruption in COVID-19 issues is another issue to navigate. The concerns of the teachers centred mainly on their welfare, the lack of PPE and a clear cut policy on schools reopening as well as the general concerns that corruption was destroying the lives of ordinary citizens (Mavhunga, 2020). The Zimbabwe teachers' unions which included the Zimbabwe Teachers' Union (ZIMTA), the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) and the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ), also raised concerns and called on the government to act against corruption by government officials. On their part, teachers threatened not to return to schools when the government opened schools until their demands for better wages and PPE were met (Mavhunga, 2020).



Figure 1: Nurses improvising for PPE.

ce: Chin'ono, (2021), <https://www.facebook.com/hopewelljournalist/posts/this-is-how-zimbabwean-nurses-are-fighting-covid-19-using-blankets-as-ppe-due-to/2924717464416939/>



Figure 2: Hospital leaked images of stillborn children and the recording.

Source: Harding, 2020.

The government did not take the actions of civil society lightly. It came up with a double-pronged response. The first response was to institute investigations, arrests, and suspend officials from the Ministry of Health, including the then Minister, Obediah Moyo (Banya and Toyana, 2020; BBC News, 2020). However, the arrest of Minister Moyo was a ‘dignified’ arrest in which he came to court with his aides and was given a fifty thousand Zimbabwean dollar bail (Banya and Toyana, 2020) which he paid in cash-raising questions of he managed to withdraw all the money in a country where access to banknotes was a nightmare and government maintained strict control on cash withdrawals (All Africa, 2020).

Then secondly, the government mounted a campaign of denial and launched various attacks, including media and legal on persons it viewed as having led in exposing the corruption. Popular among those who were arrested were journalist Hopewell Chin’ono and opposition political leader Jacob Ngarivhume. The two had called for the public to

demonstrate against the corruption and hence were charged with inciting public violence (Dzirutwe, 2020). They were denied bail several times when brought to court in leg irons (International Commission of Jurists, 2021; Dzirutwe, 2020). On the stark opposite, those charged with corruption, like Minister Obediah Moyo, came to court in a state of the art ministerial vehicle and accompanied by aides and treated with dignity (BBC News, 2020).

The government also lamented that politics of unconstitutional regime change drove the actions of health personnel and civil society. Since the turn of the 21st century, there have been allegations of western powers, led by Britain and the United States of America, having sponsored the opposition, MDC, and civil society organizations to remove ZANU-PF. Since then, the relationship between the government and civil society has been contentious and grossly lacks trust. Any actions by civil society on governance issues are viewed through these lenses by the government.

Within this context, the relationship between the government and civil society during the COVID-19 pandemic played out. While the mainstream civil society pushed the government to deal with corruption issues, opposition political movements used such issues as pretexts for demonstrations. The call for demonstrations against the COVID-19 gathering restrictions led to the arrest of MDC Alliance members for staging a demonstration in mid-May in Harare (Chonzi, 2020), Fadzayi Mahere, the opposition spokesperson, for demonstrating against COVID-19 rules (International Commission of Jurists, 2021), while Jacob Ngarivhume, another opposition member, was arrested for inciting people to demonstrate using the social media sites (Dzirutwe, 2020). In the view of the government, the opposition political parties' actions were not sincere calls for transparent management of COVID-19 funds but rather continuous acts to destabilize the country and unconstitutionally remove the government, which the government alleges had been started after a 2018 ZANU-PF election victory (Burke, 2019). ZANU-PF argued that President Mnangagwa, after winning the 2018 elections, created the Political Actors Dialogue (POLAD)¹ Where opposition political parties can bring issues of national concern amicably to the President (Madzimore and Machivenyika, 2019), by MDC-A leader among other political leader snubbed the invitation. ZANU-PF saw the act as a confrontational response to the ZANU-PF victory.

CONCLUSION

This paper reviews the role of civil society in Zimbabwe in exposing and pushing the government to act against COVID-19 related corruption. The corruption was mainly perpetrated by government officials and other politically linked persons. This made the work of civil society more complicated, as shown in the paper.

The paper began by interrogating the connection in terms of roles of the civil society and exposure of COVID-19 corruption with concrete examples and real-life cases to unpack the nexus between the main

variables in the research. The concept of civil society and attempted to locate it within the Zimbabwean setting. While the contemporary conceptualization of civil society is rooted in European thinking, the paper argued that colonialism created a hybrid form of civil society in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular. This hybrid form of civil society is still prevalent today, influenced by the fact that colonial governance systems have remained hence continued struggles for the ordinary to find space to air their views on governance issues. The post-2000 situation in Zimbabwe is even a much tougher period of operation for civil society. Contrary to the government's, any views are branded as western, and those saying them are seen as western surrogates. In this environment, civil society had to operate during the fight against COVID-19 linked corruption between 2020 and 2021.

Civil society managed to expose the corruption that was perpetrated by the government officials and persons linked to them. Famous among these cases were the Drax Scandal, the Jaji Scandal and the private hospital's scandal. The exposes led to some officials in the health ministry being relieved of their duties, with others being prosecuted. There were also brisk opening isolation centers around the country and the sprucing up of various hospitals.

While the civil society did well in exposing corruption, as noted in the paper, the government also argued that the actions of the civil society were driven by political mileage. In some cases, the government responded by arresting those who exposed the corruption on various charges and delaying their bail hearing processes. The exposing of corruption, far from uniting the nation, strengthening the civil society, and transforming the government, has resulted in more polarization within the society. Relatedly, the endemic problems of corruption in Zimbabwe probably help to explain why some civil societies aren't simply proactive in exposing corrupt officeholders both in public and private via a nationwide campaign. However, that Zimbabwe remained among countries with low negative figures of the virus (that is: deaths and infections), means that the actions of the civil society were not in vain.

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¹The Political Actors Dialogue (POLAD) is a Zimbabwean union of 2018 Presidential candidates. President Emmerson Mnangagwa created the union on the argument that he could tap from the ideas which other candidates had for national progress. Mnangagwa invited all candidates on the formation of the union in 2018. However, some leaders, prominently, Nelson Chamisa snubbed the invitation on the argument that he was the legitimate victor at the elections. Other leaders joined and then withdrew, arguing that the union was a charade to sanitize Mnangagwa and his party, ZANU-PF. Among these is Build Zimbabwe Alliance.

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